

PREFACE (*PRESENTACIÓN*)

In the early 1990s, various research groups in Portugal and Spain discussed the need to create a forum for presentations on oceanographic research related to the Atlantic Iberian coastal margin, a need justified by the lack of specific, periodic meetings revolving around this geographic setting and highlighted by the many meetings, congresses, and so forth that have traditionally focused on oceanography of the Mediterranean Sea (CIESM, MEDCOAST, etc.), including papers on the Mediterranean continental margin. This idea led, basically through the efforts of the Portuguese group DISEPLA (Sedimentary Dynamics of the Platform), to the organisation, with high hopes and a low budget, of the 1st Symposium on the Atlantic Iberian Continental Margin in Lisbon, in November 1994, an event that attracted the interest of many researchers from the Iberian Peninsula, making manifest the timeliness of a such a meeting. Papers from this first symposium were featured in two issues of the journal *Gaia* (numbers 8 and 9).

Three years later, the Facultad de Ciencias del Mar (School of Marine Sciences) at the Universidad de Cádiz, along with the Instituto Español de Oceanografía and the Instituto Tecnológico y Geominero de España on the Spanish side, and DISEPLA, the Museu Nacional de História Natural, and the Universidade del Algarve, on the Portuguese side, jointly organised, with the same high hopes and the same low budget, the 2nd Symposium on the Atlantic Iberian Continental Margin, in Cadiz, from September 17-20, 1997.

The main objective of this second symposium was to promote meetings between researchers from a wide range of institutes, but having a common interest in the study of the physical, chemical, biological, and geological processes that occur (or can occur) on the Atlantic margin of the Iberian peninsula. In this context, the meeting's vision was multidisciplinary, and several parallel sessions were held, devoted to specific topics from the different scientific fields (e.g. marine biology, physical oceanography, marine chemistry, marine and littoral geology, marine geophysics, engineering, and modelling) studying the margin in its very widest sense, from the coastal zone to the very depths of the ocean. The scientific programme of this symposium was divided into eight major areas: Tectonic Evolution and Structure of the Continental Margin; Morphology, Processes and Stratigraphy of the Continental Margin; Bays, Rias, and Estuaries; Beaches and Littoral Dynamics; Live Resources; Environment; Biostratigraphy and Palaeoceanography; and Marine Ecosystems. This second meeting was a great success, both due to the quality of the 181 papers presented and because it offered an opportunity for exchanging ideas, opinions, and data.

After this second symposium, the Organising Committee made a series of reflections with an eye to future meetings. The contributions sent to the 2nd Symposium on the Atlantic Iberian Continental Margin made manifest, once again, the need for an event of this kind, since many papers were presented in every field of oceanography. However, despite the many contributions regarding live resources, the conferences and scientific sessions on marine geology were noticeably more numerous, as they had been at the first Lisbon meeting. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the original idea, as well as most of the organisational efforts, came from researchers working in that area. This imbalance should be corrected at future events. Evidently, with only two meetings behind us, it is too soon to expect massive, wide-ranging participation on the part of researchers; however, our future efforts should be directed at making these symposia more multidisciplinary, by directly involving in their organisation other figures from the marine sciences, and not only marine geologists. Likewise, the very name of the meeting should be reconsidered, since a Symposium on the Atlantic Iberian Continental Margin would seem to exclude colleagues from the Canary Islands and Madeira; it would be better to rename it the Iberian Symposium on the Atlantic Margin. In addition, we need to raise the event's international profile, since, although the common denominator is the physical setting of the Atlantic Iberian continental margin, there are research groups in other countries that are working or collaborating on projects and papers regarding this region, some of which are beginning to participate with their communications.

Later, and to mark the 2nd Symposium on the Atlantic Iberian Continental Margin, the publication of a monographic issue of the *Boletín. Instituto Español de Oceanografía*: 'Oceanography of the Atlantic Iberian Continental Margin', featuring contributions sent by the authors who participated in the event. Consequently, 54 research papers of high quality are presented herein, grouped thematically into six chapters: Physical Oceanography; Sedimentary Processes, Stratigraphy and Palaeoceanography; Coastal Environments and Littoral Dynamics; Live Marine Resources; Marine Ecosystems and Environmental Studies.

Finally, we would like to thank the researchers who contributed their work, as well as our sponsors and collaborators, for the interest and enthusiasm they have shown from the beginning in producing this volume on 'Oceanography of the Atlantic Iberian Continental Margin', which we believe to be of high quality, and which in the future will undoubtedly represent a major contribution to a better understanding and dissemination of its subject.

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